

What Advice do Equine Physiotherapists Provide in 72 hours following intervention

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Publication date:
2021

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Citation for published version (APA):

Dunster, R., & Tabor, G. (2021). *What Advice do Equine Physiotherapists Provide in 72 hours following intervention*. Abstract from 17th International Society for Equitation Science Annual Conference .

What Advice do Equine Physiotherapists Provide in 72 hours following intervention

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Human physiotherapists provide advice to patients regarding post treatment soreness which may occur in the first 72 hours after intervention. It is unknown the exact cause but anecdotally post treatment soreness is reported to occur as a side effect from certain treatments, such as massage. Despite knowingly inducing temporary tissue soreness the benefit of physiotherapy has been evidenced, supporting its application. However, it is unknown if physiotherapists consider post-treatment soreness to occur following equine treatment, or if they provide relevant advice to ensure animal welfare is at the forefront of the intervention. It is also apparent with varying equine physiotherapy educational routes and no treatment guidelines to follow, discrepancies amongst clinicians may occur. The aims of the study were to identify if advice is given in the 72-hour period following equine treatment, and if so, why it is given and what variables affect the advice given in practice. A mixed method approach was used with an online questionnaire containing open and closed questions via social media and professional bodies. Frequency analysis was performed for theme identification from the open questions whereas percentages and median values were used to analyse ordinal data. Non-parametric statistical testing was used to test for differences between physiotherapist qualifications and years of experience. Advice was prescribed by 100% of 62 equine physiotherapist participants (chartered (n=42) and non-chartered (n=22)) for the 72 hours following physiotherapy although no statistical differences between the qualification categories were found. Turnout and in-hand exercises were commonly advised for 0-24 hours ($p=0.870$) to maximise treatment benefits, alongside awareness of the risk of post-treatment soreness. Between 24-48 hours, there was the largest variation in the advice given than any other time frame ranging from ridden to unridden ($p=0.753$). Between 48-72 hours, advice focused on increasing ridden work and returning the horse to its usual exercise routine ($p=0.107$). Assessment findings, owner experience and the competition schedule of the horse were the most common variables affecting the advice provided. Overall all equine physiotherapists provided advice for the 72 hours following treatment. Advice between 24 and 48 hours varied from unridden to ridden exercise with greater specificity needed to help form future clinical recommendations. Variables affected the advice given which could be why differences exist in practice. The study has found equine physiotherapists are aware of the effects of treatment in the first 72 hours, ultimately highlighting clinician awareness of treatment and equine welfare.

Lay person message

Advice is used in human physiotherapy to manage the effects of post treatment soreness. Physiologically human and equine physiotherapy follows similar principles therefore despite no research, post treatment soreness is suspected in horses. It is unknown if equine physiotherapists provide advice within 0-72 hours to manage the treatment effects, and if so what advice. Understanding in practice what might dictate the advice has also not been explored.

Key Words

Equine Physiotherapy, Maintenance Physiotherapy, Advice, Welfare,